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Facsimile cover sheet

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Message: Here's the Dominggas interview. Sorry, couldn't send it sooner. We may not publish it in our June Bulletin as we have so much ~~info~~ stuff re E. Timor!
Can we ~~not~~ have the Batatinha video, please? It is becoming out of date.
Also did the Portuguese press publish anything about Xanana's letter to to Hugh O'Shaughnessy? What a good initiative!

Love,
Carmel

Please tell me if there are any spelling mistakes.

Interview of Dominggas da Costa and Antonio Mesquita, Portugal, April 1991.

TAPOL: I well remember my surprise, Dominggas, on hearing that there was a woman among the 42 East Timorese convicted prisoners who had been transferred to Jakarta in 1984. I hadn't realised that a woman had been tried in Dili. Tell me about your experiences.

[Dominggas da Costa]: I was arrested on the afternoon of 2 September 1983 by the Indonesian army and taken to *kodim*. I was arrested along with two colleagues in the same group as me –Dominggos Famunuli (spelling?) and Feliciano. They were put into a cell together and I was put in a separate room, on my own. I was allowed out each morning but only for a while. I was only able to walk about inside.

Two weeks later, they started to interrogate me. They kept asking me about the organisation but I told them nothing; I just told them something about my family. After two weeks, they transferred me to Comarca–Balide. There, I was put in a cell with five – I was the only woman. The room was a bit larger but the floor was covered in faeces and urine. It was everywhere. We were never allowed out of the cell, defecating, urinating, sleeping in the same place. Our hands were tied behind our backs so that we couldn't move at all. We never had a bath, washed ourselves or went outside for a whole month. You can imagine what the smell was like. My menstruation didn't come. They gave us hardly any food. Every time they brought food, they beat me first.

How long were you held in those dreadful conditions?

A whole month. After that, they moved me to Benfica Sporting Centre, formerly a Portuguese sports centre which the Indonesian army used for interrogating detainees. Many of us were taken to that place, often left out in the blazing sun.

We were interrogated there, on and on. During the interrogation, they would place a chair–leg on my foot and stand on the chair. It was horribly painful; I really couldn't stand it. They asked me all kinds of questions, about my friends and so on, but I told them nothing. They kept taking me to this place for interrogation. When they offered me food, I refused it because I didn't want to give them any heart.

Each time I was summoned for an interrogation, they would tell me to go and have a bath, saying, "Fancy, a woman smelling like you do!" I told them I smelt so bad because I hadn't been allowed to have a bath for a month. I said nothing when they asked if I was a communist. They asked me whether I knew Xanana. Even when they mentioned the person leading my group, I said absolutely nothing.

They told me to take off all my clothes and took a photo of me naked. They kept asking whether I was a communist. Later they gave me a copy of the photo but I refused to take it. When they insisted, I tore it up in front of them.

Fixing the sentence

When were you tried?

After the interrogations ended, I was taken to court for a trial, in December 1983 – I don't remember the date. They said in court that I wasn't a political prisoner, but a criminal. I strenuously denied it. I was being tried with four men but we had to sit some distance from each other so could not have any contact. The others were: Marie, Basilio Alves Factas, Luis (Carvalho?) and Feliciano. The only other people in the courtroom were the judge, the prosecutor and the lawyer. The trial went on for a whole week.

On the last day, the judge announced that I would get 12 years but I refused to accept such a long sentence, so the judge said I could have 6 years, and I accepted that.

That's a very odd way of passing sentence. What do you mean, you didn't accept it? How did they pass sentence? Usually there are defence pleas rejecting the sentence demand made by the prosecutor. Did you have a lawyer?

I said I didn't agree because I wasn't a criminal. It didn't happen like that at all. The judge said that I must accept a sentence otherwise things would be much worse, so accepted six years. Yes, there was a lawyer, an Indonesian; there are no Timorese lawyers.

After the trial I was taken to Balide Prison and from there, I was transferred with all the others to Jakarta on 15 May, 1984. The men were taken to Cipinang, but I was taken to Salemba Prison for four weeks. I had a tiny room. I had to urinate and defecate into a tin and empty it later.

Then the director of the Tangerang women's prison, Haryati, came to fetch me. I was in a cell alone there for two weeks, then moved to Blok Anggrek. There, I stayed with two elderly women who became

my very dear friends, Sundari Abdulrahaman and Tati. At first we were not allowed to speak to each other because they were PKI prisoners and I was what they call a 'GPK prisoner'. There were four of us altogether, with my little girl who was two years old at the time. I slept in Cell No 5 with my little girl; Mama Sundari was in Cell No 11 and Mama Tati was in Cell No. 3.

I called them both Mama because they were very kind to me. If I fell ill, they would come and look after me. They taught me sewing and embroidery and taught me to speak Indonesian – I couldn't speak it at all when I arrived there. We were kept separate from the other prisoners because we were tapols – political prisoners – and the others were criminal prisoners. Sundari taught me embroidery and Tati taught me how to work in the fields. I started lessons on using a sewing machine but fell ill with diarrhoea and the lessons never started up again.

Mama Sundari asked me to help her working the kitchen, so every day I woke very early, did some physical exercises; then we had to clean our cells and clean the yard outside. After that, there was a roll-call. Then we had lunch in the dining room. After lunch we had to work – I was asked to look after the chickens, clean their sheds. This went on till I left Tangerang and returned to Dili.

Did you serve the full six years?
No, I got remission so was in prison for altogether 5 years.

What were the events leading up to your arrest?
As you know, there was a ceasefire in 1983 after the talks between Xanana Gusmoa and the Indonesian military commander in March that year. But the ceasefire broke down in August 1983 and very soon after, many people were arrested in various parts of the country.

What happened when you, Antonio, were arrested?
[*Antonio*] They put me in a tiny cell and beat me very badly, till I was half dead. The cell was so tiny, I couldn't sit down, only stand up. I was very roughly treated after my arrest; all of us were stripped naked, not given any food or water for weeks until we were so week, we couldn't stand up. The Indonesians don't treat us like human beings, they treat us like animals. When they gave us food, they would beat us first. If we asked for water, they would beat us. They wouldn't allow us to contact our families. When relatives came to see us, they were only allowed to stay a few minutes. They would beat us till we bled but never took us to hospital for treatment. They would shout at us, saying we were communists or Fretilin. If they started beating one person, everyone else would get beaten as well. They are incredibly wicked.

A one-day trial

When you were tried, what happened?
I got six years. At first, the judge said he would give me ten years but I refused to accept this, so he cut it down to six years. Everything was in the hands of the judge, everything arranged in advance. There was a defence lawyer from Kupang, a woman. She told the judge she thought ten years was too long, I also said I wouldn't accept such a sentence. So the lawyer had a chat with the judge and they agreed that I should be sentenced to six years.

How long did the trial last? Can you explain what happened from the start?
I was being held by the police, the political section; they sent me to the courtroom and the trial was over on the same day. I was tried with eight others, nine of us altogether and the whole thing was finished in a day. They didn't ask us anything at all. I told the judge, you can try me but I have done nothing wrong. He started going on about the 1945 Constitution and the Pancasila, then banged the table with his gavel, saying that we had fought against the Republic of Indonesia, and sentenced me to ten years. I replied that whatever this court decided, the people of East Timor would win their independence, we would resist integration. It's not only us here but people everywhere, in the towns, the villages, the sub-districts.

Were the people who were tried and later sent to Jakarta given harsh sentences?
Yes, all of us who were given longer sentences, 4 years or more, were sent to Cipinang. There were some who got 18 years, 17 years, 15 years, 12 years, 11 years, 8, 7, 6, 5 years. Anyone with a sentence of 4 years or more was sent to Jakarta. Almost all the 42 have been released but there are still 6 East Timorese

prisoners in Cipinang.

Ex-prisoners' plight

What has happened to the East Timorese who served these sentences in Cipinang since they returned to Dili?

[Antonio] Although we had been released, we were treated as if we were prisoners. Army agents watched us all the time. Whenever we went anywhere, officers would ask us where we had been, why we went, what we talked about. If we come home late at night, they asked where we'd been, what we'd been doing.

We really must do something for all those who are still there. Couldn't the UN or some international agency do something for them? Life is very difficult indeed for them. Now that we've moved to Portugal, things are easier for us but we think all the time of our colleagues back in East Timor. *[At this point, we studied a photo of the 41 men who were transferred to Cipinang Prison. Antonio and Dominggas gave me the names of all the Cipinang prisoners who are now back in Dili.]*

They have no security at all, no protection. They can be summoned, questioned, held, beaten up. No-one takes responsibility for anything that happens to them.

A woman in the bush

What was your experience at the time of the invasion in 1975, Dominggas?

I fled to the bush when the Indonesians invaded Dili.

At that time, I was already a member of Fretilin. I was only 17 years old and still at school. I became a member of the women's organisation OPMT. There were many women with Fretilin in the bush. We had to help maintain links between Fretilin fighters in the army and the people. The women were the ones who kept contact with clandestine groups. There were no other organisations to do this, only the OPMT. We also helped prepare the food and mend the uniforms of our soldiers. The OPMT also encouraged the women to take part in meetings. The Portuguese never encouraged women to work outside the home – they were expected to stay at home all the time. But Fretilin had a different approach. It wanted women to play an active part, to attend meetings and so on. There were political commissars in charge.

I was in the bush for three years; I went first to Ailcu. But when the Indonesian troops came close, we had to move elsewhere. But however often we moved, our women's organisation continued to function.

I was arrested in 1979 in Fatuberliu. That's where Nicolau Lobato, Fretilin president, was. Many people were killed and many of us were arrested there. There was bitter fighting there. Many of the top leaders of Fretilin were in the area.

After being arrested, we were taken to Tasihati which is on the coast. After being held there for two days, I was sent to Turiskei. because I am from there and I wasn't allowed to go back to Dili. I wasn't in custody there but I was often summoned for interrogation. Someone I knew said I had been a member of the organisation. Someone called Filomeno told *koramil* about me. I told the soldiers I didn't know anything because I was still very young at the time. So they allowed me to go back home.

What happened to the struggle after you had both been captured?

[Dominggas] In 1979 and 1980, there was already a clandestine organisation functioning. They launched an action in June 1980 against the Indonesians in Dili.But at that time I was still in Turiskei. But when I got back to Dili in 1982, there were clandestine groups active in every sub-district. It wasn't till 1982 that I was allowed to return to Dili, and as soon as I got there, I made contact with our organisation again.

Did the Portuguese behave differently when they were in power?

Very differently. They were much more disciplined. If the Indonesians are after someone, they harass the whole family. Now, there's a great deal of fear. If journalists come and speak to anyone, the Indonesians come along afterwards to find out.

Were you in Dili, Antonio, at the time of the invasion?

I was in the militia and had been sent to the west of the country towards the end of 1975. I was near the border with West Timor, near Balibo where the Australian journalists were killed in October. I was just ahead of them, nearer to the Indonesian troops who were making incursions across the border and were heavily armed. I stayed in the region until my commander was killed. Then I fled to the area where Fretilin was in control and met Carvelho and I stayed with him through 1976 and 1977.

(3)

Were you in the Portuguese army?

No, I was too young, only 15 years old in 1975. I wasn't in Dili when independence was declared in November 1975; I was still in Balibo. We heard over the radio that the Indonesians had invaded Dili. But things were in a state of disarray for years for the Indonesians, right up to 1977. Fretilin in the bush was able to keep contact with people in Dili, to tell them about the resistance in the bush.

I was captured on 18 July 1979. I had 140 people under me. We had a fight with the Indonesian soldiers, and two of my men were killed. We resisted till late afternoon and were captured at 6 in the evening. We were in the east of the country, in Fatuberliu. Most of my men were taken to *koramil* and killed. They didn't kill me but made me become a TBO – we had to do everything for the Indonesian troops.

When I was working as a TBO, up to 1981, I was in captivity. In 1979, I was transferred to Dili and held in a *koramil* there. Altogether, I was detained like this for a year and a half. While I was in the Dili *koramil*, the attack on Dili took place in June 1980. Then in 1981, the troops made every Timorese man take part in an operation to capture Xanana. This went on for 45 days – many people died of starvation or were shot dead by the soldiers. I was forced to take part in the fence-of-legs operation.

There was no way I could get a job. I was always having to report to the authorities. Such things never happened in Portuguese times. The Indonesians behave with great brutality. They'd call: "Mesquita, get ready!" and you'd have to be ready straight away or something terrible would happen.